THROUGH LIFE'S SHADOWS

BY ELIZA F. POLLARD,

Author of "Robert Aske," "Not Wanted," etc.

"I am glad you have come at last, Clement."

CHAPTER III.

"FOR BETTER, FOR WORSE."

THE room into which James had ushered Clement was dark and solemn; only a faint gleam of daylight penetrated through the closely drawn blinds; the atmosphere was depressing, and Clement, as he stood before the dying embers, felt his heart sink within him; so absorbed was he in his reflections, that it was only when Ruth touched his arm that he became aware of her presence. "I am glad you have come at last, Clement," she said, almost plaintively; "the time has seemed so long."

"My poor darling," he answered, "I did not dare to come to you sooner," and he drew her close to him and kissed her. Even in that dim light he saw how changed she was; her usually straight young figure drooped, and there was a far-away look in her eyes; she stood leaning against him as one who is very weary, and whispered, "You have heard; you know all?" He hesitated, not quite sure as to how much she herself knew. She understood, and shaking her head, she continued, "You need not be afraid, Clement; Uncle John came this afternoon and told us; at least, he told Theresa and myself that the bank had stopped payment,

that we were ruined, that my father's creditors were only kept at bay by the fact that he was lying dead in the house, but that once the funeral was over they would seize everything; he and your father have been trying to persuade us to leave this house to-night and go into lodgings, taking with us just our personal property; and it seems we have no real right even to that! Theresa and Maria are so frightened; they have consented, and their maids are packing their things; but I will not go; I am not afraid; I will see my father laid to rest, and then I do not care where I go; I will do whatever you all think right."

"I agree with you, Ruth; stay where you are until after the funeral; your presence in the house will enforce respect. It is not as if your father had left a son!" said Clement.

"I am so glad you think so; I knew you would," said Ruth. "Poor father! if all the world blame him, so much greater the reason why I, to whom he was ever so good and gentle, should stand by him. I was waiting for you to come and give me your support; you will do so now, Clement?" she added.

"As much as I can I will," answered Clement; "but listen to me, Ruth. Your father did not even know of our engagement, and my father only knew it this afternoon; of course he said it was impossible, and that I must break it off at once. But never fear, darling, I have no intention of doing so, only we must both be prudent and patient. In any case, we should not have married for a year or two; now our marriage may be a little farther off, but we can wait; we are young, and we trust each other. Above all things, Ruth, remember that—trust me."

"I will," she answered. As she said these words the door opened, and Dr. Morgan entered. His brow clouded over when he saw Clement. "Ruth," he said sternly, "I hope you have changed your mind, and decided upon accompanying your sisters to-night!"

"No, doctor, I have not," she answered. "I shall follow my father to-morrow to the grave, and thence I will go wherever you tell me; but I will not leave the house while he is lying in it."

"I am sorry to hear you say so; you may be exposed to much that will be painful. Clement must surely agree with me that it will be better for you to go away from here before the funeral. There is no use hiding the truth—your father speculated rashly, has ruined many, and consequently has made for himself bitter enemies."

"It might be wiser for her to absent herself, father, I allow," said Clement; "but I understand why she should desire to remain, and even in death vindicate, by her presence, her father's honour; let her do as she wishes. I will protect her to the best of my ability, and immediately after the service take her to her sisters. As for the future we will discuss that later," and he smiled reassuringly at Ruth, whose whole heart went out towards him in grateful love; but Dr. Morgan was by no means satisfied.

"You young people are very independent," he said sharply; "for the present you have it all your own way, but I warn you it will not always be so," and without even shaking hands with Ruth he left the room.

"Oh, Clement, I am so sorry!" she exclaimed, bursting into tears.

"So am I," answered Clement; "but, my darling, it cannot be helped, and we must be patient. It is hard for the governor; he has made great sacrifices for me, always hoping to keep me with him; now that will be impossible. He must have a partner with money; we cannot marry on the allowance he could make me. I must set up for myself, and do as he did, struggle upwards, if you are willing and feel strong enough to face such an alternative, Ruth."

For all answer she placed her two hands on his shoulders, and bringing her brave young face on a level with his, looked straight into his eyes. What he read in hers made his heart leap, as, folding his arms around her, he held her to him, and kissing her fondly, passionately, he whispered:

"My brave darling, thank God you trust me, and are not afraid."

"Afraid with you? oh, no, Clement!"

He stroked her hair, petting and comforting her. "I will be with you to-morrow as early as I can," he said, when he was at last obliged to leave her, and she saw him go, with a feeling of rest and security which love alone can give.

And Clement was true to his word. Much to his father's annoyance it was on his arm Ruth leant, it was he who steadied her faltering steps, when she stood beside the open grave and gazed down with streaming eyes into its dark depths; then, as the heavy sods fell upon the coffin, and he felt her whole frame shudder, he drew her away, and heedless of the remarks of those present, walked with her out of the cemetery, and hailing a hansom, drove with her to the lodgings to which the Misses Oliphant had removed the evening before.

"I will not intrude upon your sisters now," he said, as they drew up at the door, "but will look in upon you this evening, when we shall all be calmer. Try and get a little rest, my darling, for you are worn out, and your poor white face will haunt me all day until I see it again; you have been so good and brave," and he pressed her hand.

"Don't," she said, faintly, feeling that even this token of affection would make her break down.

He understood, helped her down, rang at the bell, and when the door was opened, with an earnest "God bless and help you, my darling," turned quickly away and left her. Truly, there are hours in life when God alone can help us!

CHAPTER IV.

FAREWELL.

"You admit, Clement, that marriage under present circumstances is impossible! I have told you, and I repeat it now, that I cannot take you into partnership if you persist in fulfilling your engagement with Ruth Oliphant. My expenses are heavy; your brother William goes to college next year; and there are the girls and the younger ones to be thought of. I am not as young as I was, and I must have help; at the same time I can part with but little of my income; and if you bring home a penniless wife we shall be overweighted."

"I will set up for myself, as other young men have done," answered Clement.

"And drag on a wretched hand-to-mouth existence till you are past middle age," answered Dr. Morgan, walking impatiently up and down his consulting room, his arms behind his back. Suddenly he stopped short. "After all, it will be only a case of two or three years if you do accept Mr. Ruthven's offer, and at the end of that time you will have some hundreds to start with. He is a rich man, and this is his only son; he told me plainly that if you agreed to accompany them abroad, and by your care saved his boy's life, he should consider nothing a sacrifice, you might ask what you like. You cannot be so mad as to throw up such a chance!"

"I do not choose to depend upon possibilities," answered

Clement. "The boy may live or die; if the latter, at the end of a year I should be no further advanced than I am now."

"Mr. Ruthven has taken that into consideration. The remuneration is to be £300 a year, all expenses paid, and the engagement is for two years, whether your services be required or not; I cannot understand how you even hesitate."

"What is to become of Ruth during that time, with no one to look after her?" said Clement.

"I will do my best," answered Dr. Morgan; "I will at least take care they shall not want for the necessaries of life."

"State the boy's case to me," said Clement, after a moment's reflection; and throwing himself into an arm-chair he shaded his eyes with his hand, and prepared to listen.

"Cyril Ruthven," began Dr. Morgan, "is twelve years of age, of a lymphatic temperament; his bones are soft, his blood in the very poorest condition, and, in fact, his whole physical system is defective; but I consider his cure possible. I have prescribed six months out at sea in a sailing vessel, then a long residence in a moderate climate, where he can live night and day, so to speak, in the open air; you know the treatment necessary as well as I do, and I believe the case would interest you. If you succeed and the boy's life is saved, your fortune is made; Mr. Ruthven has given me to understand as much."

"And you will see after Ruth, father?" asked the young man.

"As far as lies in my power," answered Dr. Morgan.

"I will go and see the boy and afterwards give you my answer," said Clement, rising.

"My carriage is at the door; if you like we will drive there at once," answered his father.

"I am ready," said Clement, and they went out together.

They drove to Glo'ster Place, and were immediately ushered into Mr. Ruthven's study. He was a tall, elderly man, a little over sixty, still handsome, notwithstanding his white hair and slightly bent shoulders. "I've seen that face somewhere," thought Clement, the moment he set eyes upon him.

"If you like we will go at once to the children," he said, after a few preliminary remarks, and, rising, he crossed the room, drew back the heavy velvet portières, and opening a door, ushered the doctor and his son into a large, airy room with wide-open windows.

On a large sofa placed almost in the centre lay a boy, so fragile and small he scarcely looked more than six or seven years of age; he was supported with pillows, and covered over carefully with soft, white, woolly wraps. Sitting on the ground facing him was a young girl of sixteen, such a pretty girl, with soft, wavy, golden hair, dark blue laughing eyes, and delicate rosebud complexion. It was a childish face, yet wonderfully bright and intelligent; a brilliant face, one might almost say, as she lifted it to greet her father. Seeing Dr. Morgan and his son, she rose, and holding out her small, white hand to the former, said in a subdued voice, "You have brought your son, and he has accepted!"

The doctor shook his head with a comical air of despair.

"No, Miss Daisy, I must deliver him over to you."

The girl's face darkened strangely; she looked at Clement with knitted brows.

"Surely you have not refused to take charge of my brother?" she said almost sternly, if one can conceive anything so young and fair being stern.

"No, I have not refused," answered Clement, looking at her, "but I wished to come and see my patient for myself before deciding."

"Ah, that is quite different," she replied, all her brightness returning.

"Cyril, dear, Mr. Morgan, the doctor's son, has come to see you."

"Doctor, also," said the physician, smiling.

"I beg your pardon," said Miss Ruthven.

Clement also smiled, saying, "My honours are so new, I am scarcely aware when they are omitted."

"So you are the young man who intends sailing round the world," he continued, taking the small, thin hand which Cyril held out to him.

"I intend nothing of the sort," answered the boy; "I am not even consulted; if I were I should certainly never move."

"That would be a bad look-out," said Clement, drawing a chair beside the invalid's sofa, "especially for me, as your father has been persuading me to accompany you, to make sure you do not do anything out of the way."

Cyril laughed. "Not very likely, seeing I cannot walk."

"Ah, but you will, Cyril; Dr. Morgan says you will!" said Miss Ruthven, eagerly.

Cyril shook his head. "Daisy is always hopeful," he answered.

"Yes, always, happily for us!" said his father. "Well, Dr. Clement—for I think we must call you thus, to distinguish you from your father—now you have seen my boy, will you go with us? You see, it would be impossible to carry him about the world without a medical attendant."

Whilst Mr. Ruthven was speaking, Clement had been passing his hands gently over the boy's attenuated frame. "How long has he been ill?" he asked.

"Ever since his ninth year; he is now twelve," answered Mr. Ruthven. "Up till that time, though never a strong child, he was healthy. His mother died at his birth."

Very gently Clement continued his examination, lifting the boy up in his arms, all the time talking to him as if he were just doing nothing particular; but Cyril watched him eagerly. "Well," he said, when Clement laid him down.

"I will go with you for one year; at the end of that time we will see," replied Clement.

"I told you so, father," said Daisy, triumphantly, her bright young face beaming; "then we can start in the *Euphrates* to-morrow!"

"To-morrow! that is rather short notice," said Clement, his brow clouding over.

"I am afraid it is, and beg you to excuse it," said Mr. Ruthven, "but the *Euphrates* is the best and largest sailing vessel running; if we miss her we must wait a whole month;" and he looked at Dr. Morgan.

"That would never do; you must manage it, Clement; a month hence would be too late in the season."

"My carriage is at your disposal," said Mr. Ruthven, and he hesitated a moment, then he added, "and my credit; there are outfitters who will provide you with everything necessary in four-and-twenty hours—you need not be on board till to-morrow night at ten o'clock."

"Thank you," answered Clement; "what time do you propose going on board?"

"Oh, not later than seven, because of Cyril."

"Then I will be here, and move my patient myself. For the present, at least, I shall trust no one with that duty—it is of vital importance;" and he looked kindly at

the boy, who responded eagerly, "I hate moving; they always hurt me!"

"I was afraid so," said Clement, "and so the mischief goes on increasing; we'll see if we can't manage better; and now I must go. You may depend upon me, sir," he said, turning to Mr. Ruthven, "to-morrow at seven. If I am not in for dinner to-night, father, do not be anxious, I shall probably be late." And bowing to Daisy, he left the room, accompanied by Mr. Ruthven only.

It was with a heavy heart that Clement directed his steps towards Brompton. He crossed the park on foot, feeling that both air and exercise were necessary to steady him for the interview he had on hand. How should he break the news of his sudden departure to Ruth? It seemed so cruel, when already she had so much to bear. But who should know how to ward off pain, to make even what is bitter sweet, if not the true lover? Very gently, very tenderly, Clement broke the news to Ruth. "If it is more than you can bear, if you bid me stay, then I will throw it up even now," he said, as she, startled, sat with tightly clasped hands, gazing straight before her, trying to realise what he had told her. "It is for one year, Ruth, then I shall come back and see you. If all is well I shall continue in charge of the boy for a second year, and shall then find myself the possessor of a small capital, enough to enable us to set up housekeeping, which, at present, my father refusing to help us, we could not do. Is not the future prospect almost worth the present pain, sweetheart?" and she, looking up at him, her eyes full of tears, her lips trembling, faltered, "Yes, it is worth it; you must go, Clement."

"My own brave darling," he murmured, raising her hand to his lips, and she, laying her head on his shoulder, sobbed out her grief.

Clement's own eyes were not tearless, but he soothed her with tender words, and in a few seconds she shook herself, and, lifting her face, forced her lips to smile. "There, it is over," she said; "how foolish I am, a year will pass so quickly."

Then Clement was able to speak to her of the future. "I shall be in receipt of a good income; you must let me help you," he said.

"There is no need," answered Ruth. "Theresa told me we had a certain sum of money in hand, and I shall find some work; you need not fear, Clement, we shall be all right." She spoke so cheerfully, and looked so brave and courageous. Hers was not a sunny face like Daisy Ruthven's, but one on which, notwithstanding its youth, a shadow rested. Both joy and sorrow had passed over it and left their impress.

"You do not know the world, Ruth. What can you do? If I have accepted my present engagement it has been in a great measure because it gives me command over ready money, and enables me at once to lighten your burden; otherwise I might as well remain at home."

"Not at all," answered Ruth; "if I am in real want, and can see no way out of my difficulties, then I will come to you for help, trusting to your love, but I will not be a burden upon you; think of the future, prepare for that—*our* future, Clement."

In vain he argued with her, she was immovable, and time pressed; their hearts were very sore notwithstanding their faith in God, their trust in His protecting power.

"I shall pray for you by night and day, Clement," said Ruth, as she clung to him at the last moment, forcing back her tears and even attempting to smile; but it was a very feeble attempt, and Clement kissed the trembling white lips: a long, fervent kiss, saying, tenderly—

"We will both pray that this time of probation may be of short duration, darling, and that our whole after lives may be the sweeter for the present pain."

And so he left her, and then for the first time Ruth felt that she was indeed alone, father and lover both gone; and the sense of her own weakness overwhelmed her. Perhaps she needed the lesson to teach her where to look for help; her naturally confident, independent nature required to be taught submission, and to realise its own weakness.

CHAPTER V.

OUT AT SEA.

"I WONDER why I have a sort of feeling that this new doctor you are so delighted with, father, will prove a great trial to me? He looks the very essence of propriety, as if he could not possibly make a mistake, or do anything wrong—it is aggravating. Now, mark my word, he will be here, as he said, at seven o'clock, neither a minute later nor a minute sooner. I hate that sort of man." And Daisy Ruthven paced impatiently up and down the room, one hand in the pocket of her blue cloth tailor-made jacket, and her sailor hat pushed a little back off her forehead, so that the fair, curly hair clustered about her face, which, at the present moment, was slightly flushed. She was evidently not accustomed to wait for anyone.

"I hope, Daisy," said her father, with an attempt at authority, "you will keep your feelings in check; you must please remember Dr. Clement is neither your servant nor your adorer. I should prefer your interfering with him as little as possible."

Daisy laughed a clear, silvery laugh. "For fear he should become the latter, eh, father? Oh, you silly daddy," and, crossing the room, she kissed him impetuously.

"Ah, but this time I mean what I say, Daisy. I have secured Dr. Clement's services with great difficulty; indeed, I doubt whether had it not been for certain personal reasons, I should have got him at all. So you will oblige me by not turning his head, as you do half the young fellows. Leave him to Cyril. Remember, your brother's life depends upon it."

"What do you think I shall do to the poor young man?" said Daisy, opening wide her large blue eyes, thus giving her face an expression of intense innocence.

"How do I know what you do with any of them?" said her father, with a slight shrug of the shoulders. "But here he is. Now, mind, you are on your good behaviour, Daisy."

A mischievous smile broke all over the girl's face as, glancing at the clock, she said, "The hand points to seven, enter Dr. Clement," and at the same moment the door opened and Clement made his appearance.

Mr. Ruthven held out his hand in welcome, and Daisy demurely did the same, notwithstanding a frown from her father.

"You are punctuality itself, doctor."

"I am glad of it," he answered, with a quiet smile. "I was afraid I might be late. Will you take me to your brother—is he ready?"

"More than an hour ago," answered Daisy. "He has worked himself into a perfect fever lest you should fail to arrive in time."

"That is bad," answered Clement. "He must learn to trust me; but it is early for that. Shall we go to him at once?"

"The carriages are waiting to take us to the docks, one especially for you and Cyril, doctor," said Mr. Ruthven.

A few minutes later Clement carried his patient to the vehicle drawn up before the house, with so much skill that the boy uttered a little sigh of relief. "You have not hurt me at all," he said.

"I am glad to hear it; now you will not be frightened next time," answered Clement, and, turning to the coachman, he gave the order to start. "But drive gently, almost at foot's pace," he said, "so as to avoid shaking." Then he got in, facing Cyril, and they drove off.

That night at ten o'clock the *Euphrates* lifted anchor and floated with the tide down the river. Clement was standing on deck; it was such a lovely night, the moon shining brightly on the waters. The lights of the vessels, the big and little craft through which they were steering, the shouts of the sailors, all told of busy life, of enterprise, of other lands, of the great mart which sent forth her goods into every quarter of the known world. But of all this Clement was not thinking; he was wondering, rather, what Ruth was doing; whether, bravely as they had parted, her courage still held out, or whether she were fretting. "I will take care they do not want for the necessaries of life," his father had said at the last moment; "you need not be anxious." Nevertheless, under the circumstances especially, he must have been a cold lover if he had been otherwise. He believed he had done right, money was a stern necessity; to remain under his father's authority would have been virtually to give up Ruth. Now, at least, he would be able to lay by, and send her help, whether she needed it or not, and that she would need it he felt assured. Suddenly, close beside him, he heard voices; one, a clear, girlish voice was saying,

"I allow he is a wonderful man, so steady, so conscientious, but I don't like him; it's no use, I don't like him."

"Perhaps it is as well for him you should not," answered Mr. Ruthven. "Leave him all to Cyril; it is wonderful how he moved the boy, not a cry, not a moan, and generally it is agonising to hear him. I have been to look at him in his berth, and to my astonishment, notwithstanding all the day's excitement and the noise on board, he was asleep."

"Wonderful," said Daisy. "Well, I think I'll go and do the same; I don't care for the river, and when I awake we shall be out at sea. By-the-by, father, I'll tell you something; your Dr. Clement is in love."

"Nonsense, Daisy; has he told you so?" answered her father, smiling.

"Children come to make the most natural bond of union." p 23.

"Told me! No need to do that, it is written in every line of his face;" and she hesitated—"and other things," she added, with a little toss of her head.

"Not very attentive to you, eh, Miss Daisy?" said her father, quizzically.

"If he were only not attentive, but he is positively rude," and the musical voice uttered these words a full tone higher than its natural diapason.

"Nonsense," answered Mr. Ruthven; "he forgot to pay you some compliment, I suppose."

"As if I were not tired to death of compliments. No, I'm only thinking it will be desperately dull for him all the months we are out at sea, without hearing from his lady-love. I wonder what made him come?"

"Filthy lucre, I expect," answered her father. "All girls are not heiresses like Miss Ruthven, and, indeed, I guess from what Dr. Morgan told me he has an entanglement with a young girl whose father has died a bankrupt, leaving her and her sisters penniless. Of course, for a rising young man, unless broken off, it will prove most detrimental. Therefore it was that, when I asked for a doctor to go out with us, Morgan proposed his own son, telling me the circumstances. He had some little difficulty in persuading him; but it was Clement's only chance if he ever meant to make a home or position for himself, so he accepted."

"And if he cures Cyril you'll make his fortune, father. Do you know, it's quite romantic." There was just a little tone of pique in her voice which galled Clement.

"No, Daisy," answered Mr. Ruthven, "I do not believe it to be in anyone's power to make another man's fortune. I will help him if he has the stuff in him, if he be a brave man, and can conquer for himself."

"You were a poor man once, father," said Daisy.

"Yes, so poor when I was landed at Sydney, after working my passage out, that I was glad to run errands, carry parcels, do anything for a few pence. I got a lift and profited by it, and then fortune followed. The bush land I invested in proved more valuable than I imagined. Still for years I worked hard and lived hard, and your poor mother did the same. You can hardly remember the old farm-house where you and Cyril were born, and where your mother died just as fortune smiled upon us, can you Daisy?"

"Yes, I can," answered the girl, in a tone of voice so serious Clement hardly recognised it. He moved further away not to overhear the conversation between father and daughter; but still Mr. Ruthven's voice reached him.

"I have one great regret," he continued, "the not having found my sister Grace. She was just your age when I left England. I have striven for years to find her. In Liverpool they told me she had gone to London soon after I left. There, of course, I lost all trace of her, and so I fear my poor Grace must have wandered forth and been lost in the hard, cruel world. So you see, Daisy, all my wealth has failed to give me my heart's greatest desire. And then there is Cyril. Will he ever have even the semblance of health?"

"Oh, yes, of course he will, father," said Daisy, "and we shall find Aunt Grace yet, and go and live somewhere in England, and be happy ever after. All the story books wind up like that, why should not a real life story?" and, linking her arm in her father's, they moved away, chatting gaily.

"Made to be a sunbeam," thought Clement, as he looked after the receding figures; "but she has yet to learn that it would not pay to make story books too closely resemble real life; they must be toned down for public taste, the shadows lightened," and with this reflection he, too, retired to his berth, with a last tender thought for his absent love.

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THE UNMARRIED SISTER-IN-LAW.

BY SARAH TYTLER,

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SISTERS-IN-LAW can be classed in the two divisions which have been made of mothers-in-law; that is, the sister-in-law who is the sister of the wife, and the sister-in-law who is the sister of the husband. There is an almost equally marked and essential difference between the examples; but I prefer to make the division between unmarried and married sisters-in-law, with their conflicting motives and aims. The unmarried sister-in-law, whether she is the sister of the wife or of the husband, has grown up in closest relations with one of the heads of the house, while it may very well happen that she has only had a recent and superficial acquaintance with the other. To start with, this is a source of difficulty and danger. If you suppose the original family affection to have been strong, sweet, and lasting, as it is bound to be, you have a pair of sisters who have grown up after the fashion of the friends Hermia and Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*—"twin cherries on one stalk," sharing every experience, well-nigh every thought and feeling; or you have a brother and sister who have from childhood anticipated the ordained alliance between man and woman by a beautiful ideal friendship. The little brother has from the first been the little sister's protector and champion, her "guide, philosopher and friend," to whom she has looked up with fond, admiring eyes; she, in her turn, has been his small helpmeet. Such early alliances as these between the members of one family are hard and fast, and, as a rule, enduring. They ought to last, for some of the finest, purest, tenderest affections of which human nature is capable are bound up with them. In the course of nature they are, for the most part, superseded by still nearer and dearer ties. But the older ties, if they have ever been worth much, survive, and will sometimes re-assert themselves later in life with a power quite startling in its force.

The man or the woman who, in the order of the universe, interrupts a harmonious duet, and proposes to convert it into a trio of still greater melody, is apt to be viewed by one disconsolate performer as an audacious, inexcusable interloper. It is all very well for the sister who becomes a wife, or the brother who becomes a husband, and flatters herself or himself that he or she has gained an inestimable new friend, while the older friend is

not necessarily lost. This is not the verdict of the older friend, who is so far set aside, who sees the new and untried ally crowned for the present with all the glamour of novelty and the fascination with which passion invests an object, openly preferred; not only so, but the intruder attains an importance and is vouchsafed a rank which is prior to every other, and lasts for life. The older friend never enjoyed these prerogatives of which she or he never dreamt, for the very good reason that no such rights existed in a real but undefined connection which means much to some sisters and brothers and little to others, which is liable to be supplanted any day.

"We were so happy before that 'fellow' or that 'girl' appeared on the scene and spoilt all," sighs many a bereft sister, and not so many, but still, a considerable sprinkling, of bereft brothers, smarting under the mortification, and struggling under the pang of having to give way to another woman or man, whose merits and constancy have inevitably undergone no test.

The position between sisters and brothers is often complicated, as I have mentioned in reference to mothers-in-law, by the circumstance that the sisters are wholly or partially dependent on the brothers in worldly matters, and cannot regard the introduction of a sister-in-law into the circle without being forced to anticipate material changes in their own social dignity—even in their comforts.

The only permanent cure for this unsatisfactory state of matters is that sisters, while ready to afford their brothers the comfort and support of their loving companionship and womanly knowledge of household management, ought still to do their best to establish and secure the women's personal independence, ought not to grasp too covetously the privileges which are only vested in them, and which do not belong to them by inalienable right.

It is not easy for the sufferer in such a case to avoid finding a supreme grievance (temporary, let us trust) in what has befallen the victim, or to resist retaliating with every available weapon on the conqueror in the encounter. One hears it said sometimes, in connection with closely-united and attached families, that the stranger who enters their ranks is to be pitied. Without doubt her post will be made hard for her; sisters and brothers, married and single, will band together against the bold invader if they imagine one of their number aggrieved or affronted. The rash originator of the strife will find every voice—even that which should have spoken most loudly in her defence—raised against her. But this is a gross abuse of primitive ties and affections—an unamiable, unlovely alliance which has for its source family selfishness instead of individual selfishness. No true attainment in graces, which are far higher than mere worldly advantages, will attend on such an alliance. No truly desirable success will accompany such modes of retaliation for supposed deadly injuries.

When a young girl's romantic, tender heart swells with indignation and sorrow to see the brother whom her ardent imagination and affectionate temper have exalted into a hero, give her up, as she chooses to term the action, for another girl, quite unworthy of him (of course), just possibly not quite the sister's equal in character, understanding, and education, let her put chains and fetters on her disappointment and chagrin. If the sister is not capable of this sensible, magnanimous self-restraint, she is preparing briars and thorns, not merely for the offender, but for the beloved brother, which it may well take the rest of their lives to eradicate. It is not true love which does not think of the happiness and credit of its object far before the resentment and vexation of the person who professes to love. It shows no great faith in the brother, whom the sister has hitherto exalted, not to believe that after all he may know best what is for his satisfaction and honour in the choice of a wife.

When the middle-aged woman, who has spent her best years in promoting her brother's interests—who has even, as she is persuaded, sacrificed her prospects to his well-being, and feels highly incensed, nay, outraged, by the elderly folly which causes him to decide that she shall resign the reins of government where his house is concerned—before she proceeds to pour forth her vials of wrath, let her pause and think and examine herself, and pray to God to strengthen her against her self-love. Is all the fair fabric of these many years of kindred friendship, and honest respect and regard to be knocked down at a blow? Her brother selected her to be his friend and companion, not his mistress, not the dictator who was to ordain the future course of his life. If the sister, whether young or old, goes out of herself and forgets herself in order to stand by her brother at the critical epoch of his marriage, if she is tolerant, considerate, kind, candid, he will almost certainly never forget her forbearance and generosity, her large-heartedness, and large-mindedness; and in preserving the grateful esteem of her brother she has every chance of winning the good-will and confidence of her sister-in-law.

It is the first step which costs, as the French say; it is the introductory passages before marriage which make or mar the relationship of sisters-in-law. Having begun well, the highest wisdom is to continue to pursue the same course of conduct; to refrain from censoriousness, back-biting, tale bearing; to be patient, indulgent, helpful, to avoid pettish touchiness—always a stumbling-block in such a relation; to cultivate every interest, whether of books, music, flowers, or of homely, practical housekeeping and needlework, which the sisters-in-law have in common. It is wonderful what a touch of fellow-feeling will do to promote friendship, till, it may be, children, who are God's peace-makers, come to make the most natural and irresistible bond of union.

I have purposely said less by implication of the unmarried sister-in-law who is a sister on the wife's side of the house, whose relationship by marriage is with the husband instead of the wife. There is not the same room for petty jealousy and rivalry between a woman and a man that there is between women alone. It is much easier in the first instance to keep the peace. In addition, the wife's sister's footing is firmer, like that of the wife's mother in her daughter's home; sister and mother may make too much of their claims, and overdo them in ignorance or in cunning. The same presuming on the old relationship, and prolonging the state of dependence on the wife's part, of which there is a risk between mother and daughter, the same temptation to interfere and become a busybody in what should be an independent establishment, exists for the wife's sister as for her mother. Yet, though the temptation is not always resisted, the evil reputation of the wife's mother does not descend in anything like a fair proportion to the wife's sister. Perhaps it is because she is a bone of contention which can be got rid of more gracefully, and, if she is still endured, is submitted to as a sort of voluntary penance. Perhaps it is because she is younger, more attractive, and more pliant, more really useful. Whatever the reason, greater license is granted to her, and she is spared, comparatively, from being fallen foul of, and held up to ridicule and dislike by whole departments of the comic drama and of light fiction.

A GLANCE AT THE SCILLY ISLANDS.

BY CHARLES EDWARDES.

THE Scilly Islands are not remarkable for their beauty. Unlike the Isle of Man and the Isle of Wight—our two most considerable English islands—they have no high land. On all the seven or eight-score islets which make up the archipelago, there is no rock summit more than 160 feet in elevation. They are, in fact, little better than a somewhat extensive reef. In stormy weather they may almost be said to be obliterated by the towering waves of the Atlantic, which encircles them.

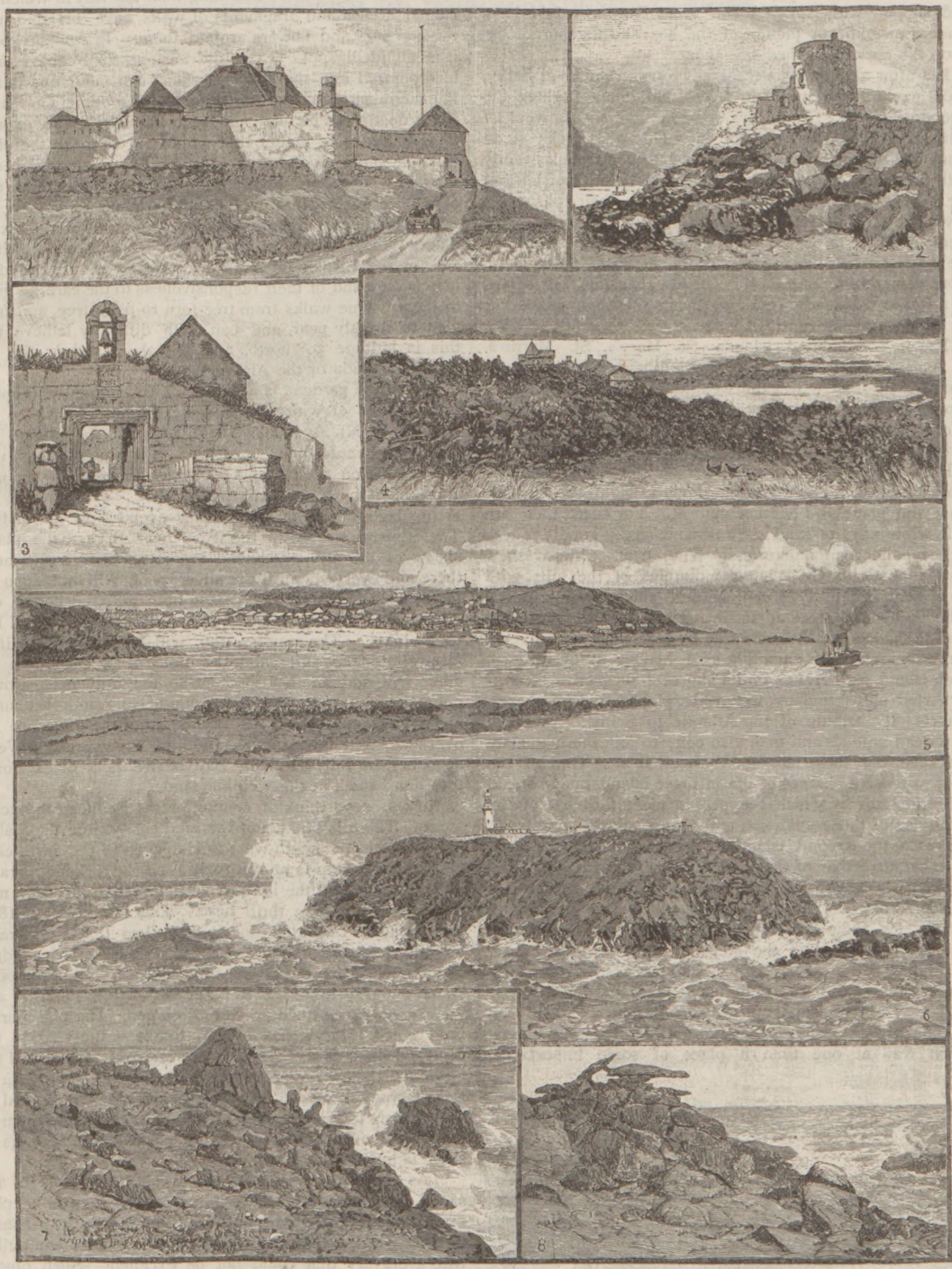
Yet, though not very lovely, there is a good deal of interest in the islands. They have a history, of course. This, too, is rather of the tame order, where it assumes to be more than domestic. The nations of Europe have never fought with each other for the possession of the Scilly rocks. They would rather, it is probable, have combined to uproot them, if that had been possible. As a harbour of refuge, the port of St. Mary's (the largest island) has a certain value. But it is not easy to reach in bad weather without a pilot; and, out of question, the islands have wrecked far more vessels than they have been the means of saving.

This characteristic, in fact, strikes the note of individuality in Scilly. The granite edges of the headlands and the almost-submerged points between the islands are pitiless for our mariners. Not a year passes without several wrecks here. In the old days it was much worse. Now, however, there are three lighthouses about the group, and also a lightship some seven miles to the north-east of them. Still, there are only too many nights when even now the lamps of the lighthouses cannot pierce the fog, and when the lighthouse alarm bells and guns are out-voiced by the sea. These are the times for disaster. In the morning the first intimation of what has been happening may come from a dead body or two washed ashore on one of the five inhabited islands, or the sight of three masts, stationary, at an impracticable angle, close against one of the outlying rocks. Then the boats put out and make further investigation; and another wreck is added to the cruelly long list for which Scilly is already responsible.

I had an inkling of the element of sadness about the islands on the very first night after my arrival at Tregarthen's Hotel, in St. Mary's. The passage from Penzance had been a wild one, and the storm-warning was up behind the hotel, to lure the fishing boats into harbour. All through the night the wind screamed furiously outside and inside my room. It had the most melancholy of notes; and the bellow of the waves upon the rocks a stone's-throw north-east from my window was a fit accompaniment to it.

This lasted all the next day, with a most violent sea on the coast. The little steamer which plies to and from Penzance made the passage with battened decks. The trip was rather in the interests of the fish folk of Billingsgate than for the sake of passengers. The mackerel and hake that had been brought in on the eve of the storm had to be got to market somehow. There was risk, of course. But what then? Is there not always a certain risk on the sea? Life itself is a risk. And so the little *Lady of the Isles* plunged into the trough of the waves, with the good wishes of the assembled Scillonians, and took her chance. Fortunately all went well, and the Londoners on the following day ate her cargo in sublime ignorance of the bad sea through which it had journeyed to their dinner tables.

Of all the coast of St. Mary's, none is more terrible in rough weather than that of Penninis Head. It is but a half-hour's stroll from the capital. The green downs fall seawards into granite shapes, to which wind and weather have given all sorts of grotesque and fanciful forms. And against these cliffs the south-western storms howl and dash their waves, with a force that would bear being described as incredible if one did not know but too well how stupendous is their power. I spent an hour or two in such a gale at the edge of



1. Star Castle, St. Mary's.
2. Cromwell's Castle, Tresco.
3. Entrance to Garrison, St. Mary's.
4. Tresco
5. Hugh Town, St. Mary's.
6. Round Island.
7. Penninis Head, St. Mary's.
8. Pulpit Rock, St. Mary's.

one of the Penninis capes, and came away half-deafened, and sopped with spray. The great Turner would have made a magnificent picture of the sea and its shore foam upon the rocks as I then saw them.

But after all it is not necessarily rough weather in Scilly, and I ought not to write in a way that might frighten the intending visitor. Two days of storm, and then a week of warm sunshine, silvery water in which the rocks stood black and sullen, and blue skies such as contrasted sweetly with the green of the downs in the middle of the isles and the yellow of the gorse, which glows upon their coasts in a bewitching manner. The gorse of Scilly will long be remembered by the visitor. It perfumes the air as much as the narcissi and lilies of the gardens. And there is no more paintable feature in the islands than this. It serves as a foil to the deadly rocks which stretch their snares far on all sides of the central islands.

The five inhabited islands—St. Mary's, St. Martin's, St. Agnes, Tresco, and Bryher—are all within but a mile or two of each other. In calm weather it is easy and pleasant enough to cross the various straits. The tide may run fast in obstruction, but the Scilly boatmen have strong arms, and they are good-natured, brave, and humane fellows withal.

Each island may be said to have the same physical characteristics. There is a backbone of highish land, with grass and gorse and heather upon it. For coast there are little white bays of sand as well as rugged granite coves and repellent promontories. The trim, white-washed houses nestle in the sheltered dimples of the hills, with their neat, intensely green, garden patches of narcissi, daffodils and potatoes adjacent. These last are protected from the gales and the salt spray by high fencing of wreck-timber or reeds, or smoothly-clipt hedges of evergreens. Each island, further, has on its shores a suggestive litter of barnacled ships' timbers, iron rods, planks, and misshapen baskets—the tribute of the Atlantic to Scilly. Now and then dead animals and men also come to join the inanimate wreckage, but these are soon attended to. One of the most expensive charges of life in these islands may be said to be the rate by which the people meet the cost of the obsequies of these unknown and unrecognisable derelicts.

Tresco, the second island in size, is for some reasons the most attractive of them all. It is the residence of the governor or lessee of the islands; and the gardens of Tresco Abbey—as the residence is called—are deservedly famous for their sub-tropical vegetation. The present governor, following in the steps of Mr. Augustus Smith, the builder of the Abbey House, and the first of the Smith lessees, allows visitors to idle about these gardens as they please. It is no small privilege. In the heart of the gardens are the ruins of an ancient Benedictine abbey, which was at one time a place of some importance.

Nothing could be more charming than the way in which the ruined arches and fragments of walls have blended with the creepers and flowers around them. In some respects it is an ideal spot. Even the ancient tombs have been incorporated into the flower-garden; nor need one talk of the sacrilege of such a transference of sentiment. Surely if the dead who lie under these cold slabs could express their views in the matter they would bid us make the place of their burial look as cheerful as the resting places of mortals who die in hope (as from their epitaphs these did) of a joyful resurrection well could be made.

It would take up much space to enumerate the exotic plants which thrive in the Tresco gardens as nowhere else in the British Isles. The gardener is very proud of his charges and of their responsiveness to the care he gives to them. One walks from tree-fern to palm tree, and from aloe to prickly pear, and can with difficulty believe that this is latitude 50° north, and not about 30° in the hot zone of Florida or the African coast.

Above the gardens is a breezy down, golden with gorse, in the midst of which rises a big granite obelisk to the memory of Mr. Augustus Smith, who may be termed the first great benefactor of the isles. It is a pretentious, ugly thing to be on such a spot; but for the sake of the man it commemorates one may excuse that. The view of the archipelago hence on a summer evening is fascinating. The crimson streaks in the west, over Bryher, the placid sheen of the still water, and the jetty, black reefs here, there and everywhere in the silver pool, will not soon be forgotten. I daresay the Tresco bull, tethered below, will be bellowing loudly, to let all the world know he would like to be loose. The poultry, too, will be crowing, as if in farewell to the sun; and the note of a cuckoo in the gorse will add another element to the influences around one. Thus it is wondrous soothing to watch the night shadows creep over all the islands, until the stars are out overhead, and the stranded hull of the wrecked Welsh schooner, in New Grimsby Bay below, is a black, formless lump stuck in the yielding sand.

No one need think of coming to the Scillies for excitement. There is nothing of the kind here—from the Bishop lighthouse in the south-west to Hanjague in the north-east. Only when a ship is on the rocks, and the rocket apparatus is being used and the lifeboat getting ready, only then may one expect a strong thrill here. The 8th of May, 1875, was a day of this kind, for it was then that the Transatlantic steamship, the *Schiller*, ran on the Retarrier ledges in the south-west, more than three miles from an inhabited island; and of three hundred and fifty-five passengers and crew, some three hundred were drowned. The old churchyard in St. Mary's has several tombs witnessing to the drowned dead of the *Schiller* here interred. Never did the Scillonians show a more manly and humane spirit than in their labours to rescue the survivors of this wreck, and in their efforts to give the many funerals that ensued a character that should gratify as far as possible the feelings of the relations of the dead.

"As soon as I got into the water," said one of the saved, "I commenced to swim, and succeeded in keeping myself afloat until I was eventually picked up by a fishing boat, in which were two little boys, who worked and pulled with a bravery that could not be excelled. Such plucky little fellows I never saw before."

Small as is the population of the isles (under 2,000), I warrant there are many such lads still to be found in them. I myself could name two or three.

CURIOSITIES OF CORRESPONDENCE CLASSES.

BY F. M. HOLMES.

"I HAVE been so interested and have derived so much profit from the classes that I should be glad to exchange photographs."

So in effect wrote a gentleman who had joined in the Correspondence Classes of Queen Margaret College, Glasgow; and when the photos were exchanged it was found that the pupil was a man of sixty and the tutor of only half that age. The pupil had exhibited considerable critical acumen in his replies, but the tutor was a little taken aback at teaching a man old enough to be his father!

The incident is suggestive in more ways than one. It shows that though these well-known classes are primarily intended to assist ladies living in the country in their private studies, yet others enter the lists and exhibit great interest in the work. As a matter of fact, the pupils include girls fresh from school and married ladies wishful to continue study; artisans anxious to obtain assistance in improving their knowledge, clergymen, and officers in the army; also as shown by the instance quoted, men in middle life or even in advancing years.

The pupils, too, dwell in all parts of the world. In India, South Africa, Mauritius, the West Indies, the Colonies, and the United States they are to be found. For many outlying districts the system is admirable, and some foreign ladies, many of whom are governesses, have taken rank among the best pupils.

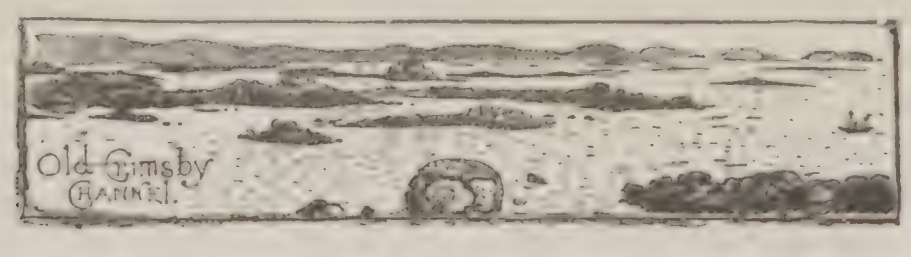
One lady so improved her style of writing that she is now enabled to earn a comfortable livelihood by the precarious, if attractive, pursuit of literature. But by way of contrast to this engaging instance, we may mention the case of another lady, who simply "lifted" whole passages from Taine and dove-tailed them neatly into her work, so that her tutor was amazed at her proficiency; until at length, in an unlucky moment for her, his suspicions were aroused, and he discovered the source of her success. Then this hard-hearted man wrote "see Taine, so-and-so," against her plagiarisms, and coldly returned them. That damsel wrote no more.

It must have been the merest vanity that led her to copy thus, for no prizes are given, and the tutor's pupils and classmates do not as a rule meet or know one another. The object of the classes is simply to help and to guide those who are willing to help themselves and are desirous of study. For instance, there are the Scripture classes, which, in connection with Queen Margaret College, have always attracted a great number of students, many, indeed, of matured minds. It is easy to see that Biblical students, especially in these days of the higher criticism, who are anxious to thoroughly pursue that branch of study, might receive considerable stimulus and assistance from such classes. But to them the help and interest obtained would be sufficient reward. Or others preparing for a University examination would no more expect a prize or care for undeserved praise from their correspondence tutor than from their coach.

The plan of procedure is simple but efficient. The prospective student obtains from the Secretary a prospectus, wherein the various subjects and text-books recommended are fully set forth. On joining the classes and paying the small fee of eleven shillings or so per term, the pupils receive a plan of study. At the expiration of a fortnight a set of questions is sent to the student, who answers them and returns them to the tutor. He corrects these answers, and, if necessary, gives explanations, and posts them to the student with a fresh set of questions. So the work continues with great regularity from the 1st of November until the middle of May, when, with the advent of what may be supposed to be summer, the classes cease for a time.

The subjects are divided into five groups, including those suitable for juniors and reaching up to degree topics. They include such divers studies as mathematics and astronomy, Greek, the theory of music, history, and psychology. The method of conducting the classes is not only far simpler than might be supposed, but is held by some to be superior to *viva voce* work for certain subjects, because it forces a pupil to set down his knowledge in writing, which tends to clearness and to a thorough grasp of the subject. A novelty for the present session's studies in connection with Queen Margaret College is a class for the study of Dante in English and of the history of the great Florentine's times. This seems to give some confirmation of the gossip that an increased attention is being paid in these days to the laurel-crowned exile. A class is also to be formed for the translation of the Septuagint, should a sufficient number of pupils declare themselves. The tutors, over a score in number, are graduates of Oxford, Paris, and Glasgow, and to their high qualifications for their posts no doubt much of the success is due, for clearly written explanations and faithful corrections, unbiassed by fear or favour of the unknown pupil, albeit she be fair as day, are of the greatest value. Just criticism, however severe, is of immense service, and by this method the much-criticised one can hide his diminished head or cover her shame-faced blushes under the veil of secrecy, for letters, as we all know, are desperately private.

Correspondence classes are not now a great novelty; yet they are quietly pursuing their educational career, assisting pupils to prepare for University, or Local, or other exams., or helping those who do not aspire to these struggles. We lately heard of a young man who asserted it had cost him £700 to take his B.A. degree at London University. Would he not have done it more cheaply through some first-rate Correspondence Classes?



WHITE COTTON EMBROIDERY.

BY JOSEPHA CRANE.

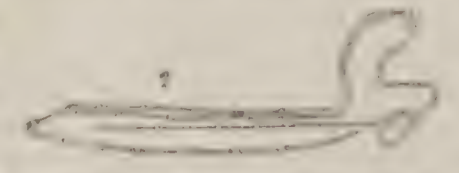
HAVING been taught by a German lady to do white cotton embroidery of a remarkably beautiful and uncommon kind, I propose here to give directions as to its execution, and to assure my readers that they can teach themselves if they will but give time and care to the effort.

In starting, I may as well say that the work referred to is not the ordinary embroidery used for edgings, and which consists chiefly of cut-out holes, satin stitch and button-hole stitch, though satin stitch is much used in it. The work I have done is much more *en relief* than any I have ever seen, and there are characteristics about it as well as the admixture of other stitches, which make it handsomer than what I had hitherto been acquainted with.

The uses of the work are numerous. Church linen, household linen, the marking of body linen, etc., can be all decorated with it. Handkerchiefs also are pretty when so worked, but it must ever be remembered that fine textures can only stand light patterns, and that the heavy relief so handsome on linen would not do on fine stuff, as the weight of the embroidery would tear away from the material.

Supposing that you have decided to work on linen—for whatever purpose—the first most important matter is to have the pattern you desire to work, border, initials, or what not, most accurately placed upon it. To get it stamped at a good embroidery shop is not an expensive proceeding, and the truth of the outline in this case repays the extra expenditure.

If, however, you wish to do it yourself there are two methods. The better of these is to lay carbonated paper upon the linen, and above that your pattern. Then with a blunt point, a bodkin or fine knitting needle, mark out the whole pattern as if you were drawing it, pressing heavily as you do so. Very great care must be taken to have the pattern pinned down quite straight before you commence operations.



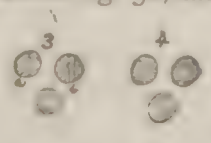
The other method is to prick out the entire pattern, and lay it with the rough surface caused by the pricking uppermost on the linen, then applying pounce. This is simply powdered charcoal applied with flannel, rubbing it all over the pattern. On lifting the paper the entire pattern will be found, but so lightly laid on that a breath will blow it off. Its use is in guiding you to go at once over every detail with a pencil, and then the charcoal can be blown away.

Suppose that you have a pattern of grapes and vine leaves traced, such as you see in fig. 1.

I always use French *à la Croix* cotton. No. 20 answers well for padding and tracing, No. 40 for the actual work.

Trace out the whole in small stitches. The wood (*a*) you would then pad heavily. Use the coarse cotton double if you like, and run it backwards and forwards (fig. 2) until you have a good thickness—as deep as the width is a good guide. Let it be very even and not drawn at all, and yet not so loose that any loops of cotton hang out. Your next proceeding is simply to work over this roll in satin stitch. Very great care must be taken to avoid any uneven stitches, and you should look very carefully where you put your needle, and see that it comes out exactly opposite on the other side. I may as well say, *en passant*, that darning cotton and piping cord were recommended to me by a worker once, but I do not find either satisfactory, and my German friend never used either. In the satin stitching over this heavy pad keep the stitches as close together as possible, for there should be no breaks in the smooth, even surface, and you should not be able to discover the padding excepting by pulling the work aside with a pin or finger-nail. A great characteristic of bad work is that the satin-stitching is not close, and after washing the existence of the padding is betrayed by unsightly gaps.

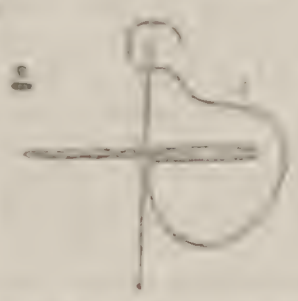
The grapes are done in precisely the same way. Each grape is padded and worked separately, and the satin stitch work lines should be all the same way. Not one grape, as in fig. 3*a*, and another as in fig. 3*b*, but as in fig. 4.



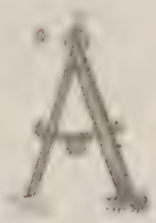
Commence at the left, so as in working not to be rubbing your needle against anything that is finished. Friction generally should be avoided, and though I have begun by describing how the wood is worked, as a general rule I always leave the heavy part containing any satin-stitching to the last.

Leaf *c* is incomplete, but shows the first stage. Run the whole outline twice or three times, the veining the same. Excepting in the first, the outline should not go through the linen. Catch your threads up in the line already made (see fig. 5). Then work the outline in close stitches like satin-stitch on a small scale (fig. 6) so that the outline is like a fine cord. Work the tendrils in the same way.

The tiny dots for filling up (leaf *c*) are made by using the finer cotton, and the stitch itself is called *point sablé;* in reality, if well worked, it should be like a grain of sand. It is but a tiny back stitch—nothing more, but the great art lies in making it like a dot, thus . — not like a flat seed (fig. 8). The latter is very ugly.



To do this stitch good eyesight and knack are required, and some people need to practise it a long time before they can get it right. I have known one pupil learn in a few minutes, and another obliged to practise for some weeks for several hours a day before arriving at perfection. Well worked it is most lovely, and has a lace-like appearance, which, in a leaf pattern, contrasts particularly well with the veins which stand up from it. Badly worked it is extremely ugly, as in fact all bad work is; but in this embroidery finish and excessive neatness are really more indispensable than in many other classes or branches of needlework.



Waiting.

As I have said, it is only a single back-stitch taken alternately with the same amount of space left in the linen.

Should the linen be coarse, the back-stitch should not be more than over a single thread, and it is well to put in the needle the second time at an almost infinitesimal angle, so as to give the tiny stitch a slight turn, to avoid its lying absolutely flat.

Every stitch must be perfectly separate from the others, and no one stitch should touch another. However much you may have to fill up odd corners and points of leaves, the same rule obtains. The second row must not come directly under the first.

The dotting should be as fine and close, and yet each dot separate, as can be imagined from leaf *e*.

A letter or monogram would look well, worked as in fig. 9, in cord and *point sablé*. A thick satin stitch crosses the letter, which has a narrow cord-like border, *point sablé* dotted like the vine leaf. But any fancy in the arrangement of the stitches can be followed.

For marking house linen use much coarser cotton, pad heavily, and if you care for colour, stitch round the initials with red embroidery cotton.

For all fine work, good light is requisite, and I cannot refrain from giving the warning that it is most injurious to the eyes to attempt it in bad light. If you have to work at night, a lamp or candle should be close to you, for as an old friend used to remark to me, "there are no eye shops," and if one loses one's sight, it cannot be replaced.

In washing the raised work, pains should be taken to treat it carefully, and in ironing it a thick fold of flannel should be placed under the ironing cloth. To iron it on a flat surface would be to destroy the beauty of the relief. If well worked, it washes extremely well, and makes a most lasting and handsome decoration

A PAGE FOR GIRLS.

PICTURES FROM THE PAST.

WE read in the New Testament of two young damsels who form contrasting pictures as they stand out dimly from the bygone ages. Though one was already wedded —the wife of Philip the Tetrarch —both were still in the blossom of youth, full of girlhood's energy and brightness and hopes; yet one picture makes us shudder, the other tunes our hearts to praise. One of these damsels dwells in high places, and is richly clad, jewelled, favoured, surrounded with luxury; the other is in a lowly station, dwelling with those who are despised, persecuted, and hunted; but God seeth not as man seeth. The graceful daughter of Herodias is the damsel to be pitied, the young keeper of the Christians' gate is in the blest and happy place. (See Psalm lxxxiv. 10.)

Now, I want my girl readers to notice that *character* is not always decided by *surroundings*. We cannot choose our circumstances, but character is a personal responsibility. Rich people, those in high stations, those even whose lot seems thrown with the worldly, have proved they can be lights for God and for good; because Salome was in the midst of temptation, she was not obliged to be wicked. When she became the active cause of John the Baptist's murder she resisted the voice of conscience, the appeal of her own womanhood; *circumstances* can never *make* us sin. So whatever be your station never whisper to yourself the excuse that you are *obliged* to act contrary to your conscience. An old writer has said, "God has flowers of grace in strange gardens." Even if your position be one of temptation like Salome's, be God's flower of grace therein, and your life for Him shall yet *alter* the circumstances and make fragrant your surroundings.

But, if it be possible, keep from the way of temptation. You pray daily that God will not lead you into temptation; never go into it willingly and open-eyed.

Our two pictures are the young daughter of Herodias and Rhoda, the damsel who opened the Christian's gate to Peter, set free by the angel. Both are connected with God's servants; do not think lightly of *your* influence. You have it in your power to increase and brighten Christian service, or to hinder and even destroy it. Salome, in the wild excitement of the much-applauded ballet dance, receives an impetuous promise from Herod. What an opportunity for the kindness and compassion of a girl to overflow! Her mother's guilty suggestion reminded her of John the Baptist, innocent of harm, brave for the truth, suffering for conscience sake. What an opportunity for Salome to ask his freedom of Herod, to claim mercy for the oppressed, the opening of the prison for the bound. It was an opportunity that never came again; it was the golden hour, and she stained it evermore with sin.

Now is *your* opportunity; the future is a mystery, over eternity there is a veil. But *now* is your time for good and holy service, merciful words and deeds, making some other life the better and happier that *you* live, making your home and your neighbour more Christ-like because *you* are there. You and I know not how soon our opportunity may be gone; to *waste* it is, like that guilty girl, to stain it with sin.

Now is our opportunity for service, also for *prayer*. "What is thy petition?" asks the King of Kings, who can crown us with the highest good, and with whom there is nothing impossible. Bring your difficulties, your needs, to Him; prepare your suit, let the Lord know what is in your heart. He is waiting to be gracious; do not delay your request. I have read of blocks of stone that seemed meant for temple or palace, for they were squared and dressed, yet somehow they remained unused in lonely quarries, and the buildings were reared without them. The preacher, telling of these blocks, exclaimed to his hearers, "Beware, lest God's grand temple should be built up without *you!*" Know the hour of your opportunity; if you will, you are able now to do good, to come to the Lord with your prayer, to be known as His servant and fellow-worker; but the present hour will never come again. We shall never in life go back this present way, "we only pass this way once." What will you make of this opportunity? What did the daughter

of Herodias make of *hers?* In her decision may be traced the bitter harvest of bad training, dangerous excitement, harmful company. "What began in folly ended in crime." When we think of the murder of John the Baptist, we think, too, of a girl at the crisis of dawning womanhood, standing in with the forces of guilt, making a choice on the side of Satan, using her influence *against* the truth, bearing the responsibility of a treacherous crime. You who have good, Christian mothers thank God for them. You never can thank Him enough for so high, so sweet a privilege. But you whose homes may not be so helpful must also keep before you the solemn matter of *personal responsibility*. The mothers we rise up and call blessed cannot answer for our souls; the homes we find unhelpful need not condemn us; *you* and *I* must give account for ourselves, must personally make our eternal decision, must choose whom we will serve and on which side our influence is to be given. If you are the only Christian in your home, that is all the more reason why your light should shine there for God, and your influence be consecrated for good, and that you should stand in with His followers bravely and openly. It would have cost the daughter of Herodias much to have declared to her mother, "It is *wicked* to choose as you suggest, and I will not do it," but who knows what the influence of her child might have wrought for poor, guilty Herodias? The refusal would have startled and astonished her, perhaps spoken sharply and powerfully to her conscience; but Salome's influence went on the side of the evil one, and a band of broken-hearted men came for the dead body of the martyred hero, and went and told Jesus.

The other picture concerns *Rhoda*, the meaning of whose name is "a rose," and her memory is fragrant to this day. Rhoda was not like the serving-maids who laughed Peter out of his fidelity to Christ; young as she was, she was found with the Christians, sharing their dangers and their prayers. The brightness of her youth must have cheered many a sad heart at their prayer meetings. Oh, do not let Satan have any of *your* brightness and energy, reserving the dregs of your life for Jesus, but give Him your life in its blossoming time, consecrate to Jesus the joyful energies of your girlhood, it will spare your old age many sorrowful memories. Rhoda could not open the gate to Peter for very gladness. What was she so happy about? Nobody had offered to give *her* whatever she wanted—nobody except the Lord, who says to us still, "Ask what I shall give thee." We may be sure that little prayer-meeting had taken Him at His word. They had been praying for Peter, and the answer had come, beyond their dreams, their hopes, their prayers. Rhoda's was no selfish gladness; her heart overflowed because poor Peter, bound with chains, afflicted with many sorrows, waiting in prison for martyrdom, was set free by God—free as the birds of heaven! Those who heard her tell the news declared she was mad. Some must have been praying with very little hope; but when we know a thing is true, let us keep firmly to it and not be shaken by what other people say. They found out at last Rhoda spoke the truth; a high privilege was hers to be the bearer of good tidings; but, whatever our position, it is a privilege you and I may share. Mr. Moody tells of a ship-captain who, sailing near some slaves immediately after the Emancipation Act had been passed, could not wait to bring the good news with formality, but put a trumpet to his mouth and shouted, "*Free, free!*" It is our privilege to know and to let others know that our Redeemer can break the strongest bonds of Satan, and set free the penitent and believing heart. He paid for the sinner's freedom on the cross of Calvary. Be a bearer of good news like Rhoda, and not like Salome—a life that causes others to sin. God is entrusting you just now with *youth*, as He once entrusted *them*, but the days will come when heart and flesh grow weary, and you will look back on the present misspent or used for Him. "Bestow thy youth," says Sir Walter Raleigh, "so that thou mayest have comfort to remember it when it hath forsaken thee, and not sigh and grieve at the account thereof." You are called upon to choose good or evil. Yours can be no neutral decision; you are with God or against Him—which shall it be? Oh, if in the time of hope, in the May-morn of life, you are found like Rhoda with God's people in *heart* as well as in presence, if you care for His afflicted ones and bring the glad tidings of what the mighty Lord can do in difficulty, trial, and darkness, if, feeling your personal responsibility, you have chosen to serve the Lord, you are on the right side, and the Master's blessing will be the sunlight of your future. The Lord who is dear to you in girlhood will be dearer in old age, and a life spent for Him will mean many and many a star in your crown of glory.

Salome's influence was for Satan, Rhoda stood out on the side of Christ—which way is *your* influence? It was said of a quiet, unpretentious woman once that she was "a walking gospel," and on a certain small grave of a girl there is an epitaph saying, "it was easier to be good when she was with us." Will you make it easier for others to be good? Will you resolve that *your* influence shall never tempt a heart away from the Lord, but ever draw and attract and lead those near you to Him whom you proclaim by the sincerity and joy of your life?

"Come down from hill and mountain
In morning's ruddy glow,
Nor wait until the dial
Points to the noon below;
Be faithful to thy mission
In service of thy Lord,
And then a golden chaplet
Shall be thy rich reward!" **M. S. H.**

LIFE-WORK.

BY AUGUSTA HANCOCK.

THERE is work to do, my sister,
In the world's great field to-day,
Deeds of mercy, deeds of kindness,
Words of tender love to say;
Do the right, whate'er befall thee,
God will guide thee on thy way.

There is work to do, my sister,
For the road of life is long,
Help the weary, raise the sinners,
Wage an earnest war 'gainst wrong;
So that with the crown of triumph
Comes the gladsome evensong.

And the work is well requited,
When the shadows veil the west,
And earth's tired toiler passes
To the mansions of the blest,
Where life's sorrow fades in rapture,
And the weary hearts find rest.

DRESS AND DRESSMAKING.

As we intimated last month, there are some very definite changes in the making of dress skirts. The long basque, worn with both dress bodices and out-door jackets, has made it necessary for the skirt to be as plain as possible over the hips, and this necessity has given rise to the umbrella or fan shaped skirt shown in Fig. 4. As will be seen, it is cut like a large circular cape, and mostly in one piece when double width material is used, the only seam being down the centre of the back. The front and sides of the skirt are made to fit the figure by three dart pleats set in on either side, while at the back the pleats are drawn very closely together in the centre. These plain skirts make the invisible setting in of a pocket a matter of difficulty; this can be overcome, however, by the use of a pocket flap about an inch wide, which is set on either side of the skirt. A real or imitation row of buttons is introduced, and under cover of this flap the pocket is put in.

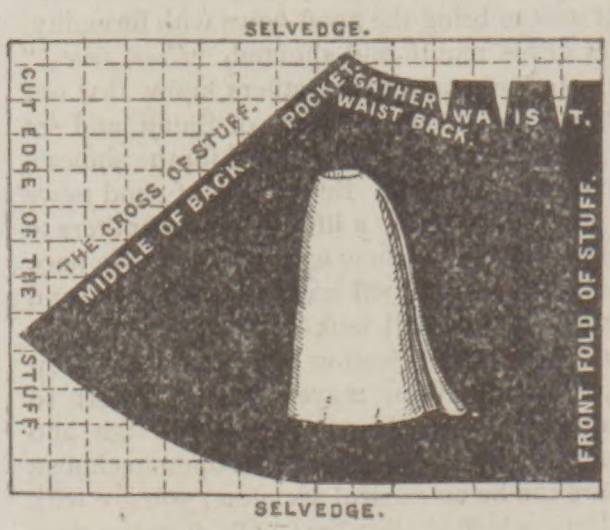


Fig. 4.

Dress sleeves do not appear to be worn quite so high on the shoulder as they were a short time back, and we find that the leg-of-mutton sleeve, such as our mothers wore in their young days, very full at the top and buttoned tight below the elbow, is one of the newest styles for the present day. One great fault of these high sleeves is the danger of getting them crushed under a jacket sleeve, which, no doubt, accounts for the popularity of the pelerine style of cape.

Notwithstanding, we find that three-quarter length jackets still hold their own, for many ladies feel more snug in a jacket than in a loose mantle.

Fig. 5 shows a very suitable design for a young lady's school jacket. It fits up close at the neck, and has the ordinary turned-down coat collar and revers. Melton cloth, with braid for trimming, is the material used; a yard and a quarter will make a jacket for a girl of twelve to fourteen. It will be advisable to use silk to sew the braid on, whether by machine or by hand, as it will keep its colour better than cotton, which turns brown and looks shabby.

Fig. 6 also shows a three-quarter length jacket with fitting back and half-fitting fronts, which can be worn open or closed. The stand-up collar is lined with the pretty Krimmer trimming, so much worn this winter. The fastenings are made with small tabs of the cloth, or a cord or passementerie fastening can be bought and stitched on.

Fig. 7.

Fig. 7. The skirt and bodice of this costume are made of dark brown cloth, while the sleeves and trimmings, and also the sleeveless jacket, can be of velveteen or Krimmer of the same colour. The short-waisted bodice is buttoned invisibly down the centre and hooked at the side, as is also the skirt, which is made after the style shown in Fig. 4, the seam down the centre of the back being covered by a strip of velveteen or Krimmer, about six inches wide below and graduated to four inches at the waist. The front of the bodice is trimmed with rows of military braid, as is also the bottom of the skirt above the trimming. Material required: Cloth, 6 yards of 42 ins. wide; Krimmer, 1¾ yards of 54 ins. wide.

Fig. 5. Fig 6.

Flat patterns can be supplied. Figs. 4, 5, and 6 post free, 6½d. each; Fig. 7, dress, 6½d.; sleeveless jacket, 4½d. Address, "M. C. Pattern," 9, Paternoster Row, E.C.